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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001209

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE BUHLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: INL COUNTER-NARCOTICS EFFORTS EXTEND TO THE PROVINCES

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: At the invitation of Department's INL Bureau, Post hosted the visit of Travis Birney of DEA's International Training Division from 14-18 September. The visit was arranged to prepare for two one-week Basic Drug Enforcement Seminars for Turkmenistan's State Counter-narcotics Service (SCNS) scheduled for March 2010. During the visit, Birney met with the SCNS Deputy Director and the head of its training center, as well as the head of its office in Lebap province. SCNS officials were enthusiastic about meeting with their American counterpart and openly discussed training issues. They were unusually transparent in responding to questions about Turkmenistan's counter narcotics legislation and criminal procedures. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) BACKGROUND: Early in 2009, INL concluded an interagency agreement (IAA) with DEA for the provision of two one-week Basic Drug Enforcement seminars for the Turkmenistan's new State Counter-Narcotics Service. INL is funding the training sessions in the framework of the Letter of Agreement between the U.S. and Turkmen governments established in 2001. Two consecutive one-week courses will be held in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat (the capital of Lebap Province) next March. Each seminar will host 30 junior to mid-level SCNS officers. Over the last two years, DEA's International Training Division has also participated in two NATO/Russian Council training courses that were held in Ashgabat, in August 2007 and September 2008.

¶4. (SBU) During the week of September 14-18, Travis Birney, Special Agent with DEA's International Training Division, visited Turkmenistan to conduct a site survey and meet with SCNS officials in preparation for the DEA seminars. On September 15th, Birney, accompanied by Post's TDY DEA Special Agent and INL Assistant, met with the Deputy Chief of SCNS, Colonel Muhammed Orazov, and the Head of SCNS International Legal Department, Aman Muhammedkuliev, to discuss the proposed training seminars, classes and possibility of conducting one of the seminars away from Ashgabat. The SCNS

officials welcomed the training proposal and stressed that learning from DEA's vast experience would be very helpful to their newly established agency.

15. (U) The idea of holding one of the seminars in the provinces was also well received, as it was pointed out this would enable more provincial officers to participate in the seminar, as well facilitate their travel to the site. Out of a list of 25 sessions proposed to them, the SCNS officials chose five, including informant handling, surveillance, undercover operations, interrogation/interview techniques, and operation planning. They declined the MILO class (Multiple Interactive Learning and training Objectives) - Computer based scenarios pertaining to the use of deadly force, explaining that SCNS officers do not carry weapons either on or off duty. Additionally, TDY DEA Agent asked several questions regarding Turkmenistan's laws and criminal procedures so as to tailor the seminars to local conditions. The SCNS officials were uncharacteristically responsive in giving clear answers to all of the questions and discussing the issues openly.

16. (U) The following day, the DEA representatives visited the SCNS training facility located in the outskirts of Ashgabat. Birney, at the request of SCNS, gave a presentation on DEA's history and mission to the group of students present at the training center, currently enrolled in a three-month training program for junior officers. The students seemed appreciative of the opportunity to meet with the American officials and listened attentively to the presentation. Afterwards, they asked a lot of questions on topics ranging from what the most common narcotics in the United States are to whether citizens are rewarded for informing on drug traffickers to how DEA conducts seizures. After meeting with the students, the DEA officials met with the Head of the training center, Major Oraz

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Ataballyev. Describing the training provided to new recruits, Ataballyev then proposed that DEA also hold their seminar at the training center. He said that it would be very beneficial not only to their junior officers, but also to more senior officials. He expressed thanks to DEA and the Embassy for supporting their work.

17. (U) On September 17th, the DEA representatives and INL assistant traveled to Turkmenabat to meet with the Chief of the SCNS Provincial Directorate, Major Kurban Bayramov. (NOTE: Bayramov is a career Ministry of National Security officer. He was seconded to his current position in November 2008, immediately following his participation in a U.S. study tour funded by CENTCOM. END NOTE.) Bayramov warmly welcomed the guests and said he fully supports holding a seminar in Turkmenabat, as this would enable his and neighboring provincial officers to participate. He noted that his directorate is the largest in Turkmenistan, as he has three municipal and 13 district offices under his supervision. He said that gathering officers from the provinces would not only help them to learn from experienced U.S. counterparts, but also help them to meet each other and exchange ideas among themselves. He promised to provide any assistance needed to organize the Turkmenabat seminar and said that he would be glad to attend some of the classes as well.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The frankness of the discussion was a surprise. Perhaps, our interlocutors were more open because it would allow the Americans to customize the proposed seminars to meet SCNS needs. The meeting with the SCNS Deputy was perhaps the most important on the agenda. It lasted for almost three hours and covered a wide range of issues. It was the first time SCNS officials had openly answered questions about their operations and internal regulations. They further confirmed that the law on criminal conspiracies is in force and that undercover operations are legal. However, reverse undercover operations (where the undercover agent sells drugs) are not. SCNS also admitted that the use of confidential sources (CS) is permitted, and CS handlers can testify on the behalf of CS, as can undercover agents. The officials said that seized funds go to the treasury and are distributed from there and sometimes can be given back to the SCNS. Colonel Orazov also confirmed that SCNS officers do not carry firearms, although they receive formal training on the use of Makarov pistols and AK-47 rifles. In the

future, they plan to have weapons that could be checked out for special operations. It was also revealed that SCNS does not conduct wiretaps. However, they expressed an interest in obtaining a list of equipment used by DEA for this purpose as well as vendors, in the event they want to purchase some.

19. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: The meeting with the Chief of the SCNS Lebap Directorate was also a positive step in counternarcotics cooperation as it was the first time that either the INL Assistant or DEA representatives had met an SCNS provincial official at his offices. The atmospherics of that meeting were warm and friendly. Bayramov was anxious to demonstrate Turkmen hospitality and invited his guests to a restaurant for local kebab and beer. It appeared that these provincial officials feel freer to socialize with foreign officials than their counterparts in Ashgabat do. END COMMENT.

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